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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND AFERNANDEZ,
IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: MEPP, Palestinian Developments,
Putin/Olmert, Lebanon, Iraq (10/17 -10/19)

11. Summary: The Syrian press between October 17 - 19, covered the
following issues:

President Asad met with Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel
Moratinos on Sunday. Papers quoted Moratinos as saying that "Syria
is part of the solution rather than the problem."

President Asad held an Iftar on Sunday and gave a speech to Syrian
clerics, in which he called on clerics to confront the distortion
which Islam is encountering, through dialogue and wisdom.

In a meeting with the head of the Political Department of the
Palestinian Liberation Organization, Farouq Qadoumi, President Assad
stressed the importance of Palestinian national unity and the
continuation of inter-Palestinian dialogue to achieve the ultimate
goals of the Palestinian people, mainly ending the Israeli
occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian state with
Jerusalem as its capital.

President Asad also met with Egypt's Intelligence Chief, Omar
Suleiman, who delivered a letter from Mubarak which dealt with
bilateral relations and developments in the region.

Papers also covered a meeting between the Palestinian Minister of
Interior and his Syrian counterpart, who renewed Syria's support of
Palestinian national unity.

Chief of Staff Ali Habib underlined on Wednesday that stability in
the region cannot be achieved without Syria, as it has become a
symbol for all free and honorable men of the nation.
Papers also featured a celebration for graduates from the Syrian
Navy Academy, and an address by Major General Ali Habib emphasizing
that Syria will not bargain on her principles and will always call
resistance a legitimate act and will always consider terrorism a
rejected act.
End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad reviews with Moratinos the situation in the region,
Syrian-Spanish relations and the European vision regarding launching
the peace process (Government-owned Tishreen, 10/15)

"President Asad receives a letter from President Mubarak about

bilateral relations" (Government-owned Tishreen, 10/16)

"Moratinos: Syria is part of the solution, no peace without her" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 10/16)

"President Asad reiterates to Qadoumi the importance of resuming dialogue and enhancing Palestinian national unity (Government-owned Tishreen, 10/16)

"Under the patronage of President Asad a new batch of Naval Academy cadets graduates in Lattakia. Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Ali Habib: Syria will not relinquish its firm principles"

"Russian President Putin discusses issues in the Middle East and Iran with Olmert, reiterating the importance of establishing a just and comprehensive peace" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 10/19)

"President Emile Lahoud calls on the UN to play a neutral role. Lebanese condemnations of foreign intervention in Lebanon continue" (Government-owned Tishreen, 10/19)

"Lebanese President Lahoud: Lebanon is paying the price of foreign interventions. Speaker of Lebanese Parliament Berri stresses necessity of forming a new national unity government" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 10/18)

"Killing of ten US soldiers in Iraq within 24 hours. The White House: Rising US casualties will not change our policy" (Government-owned Tishreen, 10/19)

"19 Palestinians martyred and injured in Gaza in the ongoing Israeli aggression. Israel threatens to invade the West Bank: We will not permit a new Lebanon" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 10/18)

"President Bush signs a law allowing the torture of prisoners under the claim that it protects the US from terrorists" (Government-owned Tishreen, 10/18)

"In light of growing expectation of a second nuclear test, the US and North Korea exchange threats of war" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 10/18)

"A Jordanian committee calls for boycott of Israeli products" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 10/18)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Will Israel Change its Aggressive Skin?"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, said (10/18): "The Israeli Defense Minister's threats against Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza are not new or surprising. But the fact that the threats were made in the Israeli Knesset indicates that the majority of Israelis adopt this hostile discourse and know only the language of force, wars, and bloodshed...."

"Israelis do not seem to have learned the Lebanon lesson. They still believe the language of force will bring them security, although the latest aggression against Lebanon showed that Israeli security is threatened not because of missiles, but because of the policies of the Tel Aviv rulers, who have dropped peace from their dictionary and calculations and rejected -- and continue to reject -- the dialogue that brings security to a region exhausted by wars and the policy of aggression and terrorism...."

"Confused Dreams"

Ali Qasim, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (8/19): "Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is mistaken if he believes that his reference to an Arab-Israeli axis to confront extremism will help him create a rift in the Arab position or evade embarrassment before the world as a person who rejects peace and hinders attempts to revive the peace process...."

"Peoples and countries of the region realize that no axis can serve their interests and that the conflict with an enemy that occupies Arab land remains bigger than any illusion...."

"The basis of stability is ending occupation and returning usurped rights to their owners by re-launching the peace process on the basis of the exchange of land for peace.... Any other arrangement will be a jump into a vacuum that would only exacerbate the

situation in the region...."

"The Less Bad is Too Bad, too; Has Constructive
Chaos Reached the Security Council?"

Former Information Minister Dr. Mahdi Dakhlallah commented in
government-owned Tishreen, (10/19): "We reject the argument that
countries have only one option: to engage in a confrontation with
the powers of hegemony or to accept subservience to them and abandon
their independence and rights.... There is international pressure to
make these forces understand that the world is not an easy target
waiting to be controlled, but a host of wills, values, principles,
rights, and interests.... History will certainly record that a small
number of weak countries and nations stood in the face of hegemony
in one of the most difficult stages in the development of humanity.
These countries made sacrifices and were starved, besieged, and
fought, but they showed astonishing steadfastness in order to build
new international relations based on principles, not on the
philosophy of power...."
Corbin